

This study focuses on student perception of a service learning approach to understanding public health in a limited resource, rural setting. First defined by Robert Sigmund, service learning is an experiential learning approach that is premised in a reciprocal process. According to Sigmund, service learning occurs when the students and the recipients mutually benefit from the task at hand. In this study, we aim to determine if the application of service learning is an efficient tool for guiding students to reach the highest level of Krathwohl's Cognitive Dimensions of Learning. Revised from Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning, the Cognitive Process Dimensions outlines the evolution from lower order thinking skills to higher level thinking skills. The layers are referred to in the following order: remember, understand, analyze, evaluate and create, with create being the highest level of cognitive thinking (Krathwohl, 2002).

The service learning course is a public health elective that focuses on an examination of public and community health in Cattaraugus County, NY with specific focus on the City of Salamanca. The City of Salamanca is a US city that lies within the territory of the Seneca Nation of Indians. The history of colonization, forced assimilation, forced relocation and destruction of lands held sacred by the Seneca people still impacts relationships and public health in the region. Additionally, the collapse of the railroad and lumber businesses that were supporting the local economy resulted in an increase in individuals living in poverty in a limited resource region.

Students explored the interrelationships between the two populations, enrolled Seneca and non-enrolled, and how these two separate governments provide aid and resources for the community, specifically in regards to health care, accessibility, and public health programming. Students worked with community collaborators examining Cattaraugus County health data to perform a needs assessment on health education programming for the area. Students and collaborators employed the PRECEED/ PROCEED model to develop health education lesson plans to educate children ages 5-18 years attending the Youth Center within the City of Salamanca (Green, 1980). While visiting Salamanca, students met with local leaders in public health, visited the Seneca Iroquois National Museum, explored natural lands, dined with children and families in the local soup kitchen and packed and delivered bags of food for hungry children, in addition to executing a health promotion program.

As a part of the course, my research project aimed to analyze the student participants' experience and reflections to determine the effectiveness of the experiential learning pedagogy. I hypothesized that this pedagogy in conjunction with a traditional classroom experience

effectively evolve the students' learning experience to a higher level of cognition while fulfilling a community need. To qualify each student's experience, I developed a set of questions and interviewed each student individually. Additionally, each student was required to write weekly reflections leading up to the trip as well as after. General themes from these reflections were extrapolated to support the conclusions of the study. All students reported a memorable and impressionable experience. The group of students were confident in their developed ability to synthesize material learned in previous classes and create a lesson plan appropriate to the needs of the community, with the assistance of community collaborators. They were able to foster an impactful activity in a community that consistently faces multiple challenges including institutionalized racism and limited resources. Students reported further growth beyond a textbook, reporting a level of emotional learning through relationship building and immersion. The students challenged their own previously held ideas pertaining to stereotypes and privilege through this service learning process. While this study has limited power because of the small sample size, the collected data suggests that this service learning module elevated student cognition from the lowest dimension of recall to the highest dimension of creation indicating that higher education institutions should consider expanding experiential learning opportunities for students studying health promotion disciplines.

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